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RHMFISS/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFAAA/DIA WASHDC
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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: MFA PUSHES ABC GOALS AS SUMMIT PROSPECTS LOOK
BRIGHTER AFTER FM VISIT

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1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Over a working lunch on February 15, MFA Americas Director Askar Tazhiev told Charge that State Secretary-Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev was very pleased with his February 1-4 visit to Washington and wants to get to work on what the MFA sees as growing U.S. support for the OSCE Summit. On the Annual Bilateral Consultations (ABC), he fretted that the forum lacks the necessary high level coverage. Charge urged MFA to work with member states to make the dialogue a success in its proposed form. Tazhiev promised to assist with several lingering administrative issues. END SUMMARY.

TONE OF FM MEETINGS AUGURS WELL FOR THE SUMMIT AND A POSSIBLE
PRESIDENTIAL BILATERAL

3. (SBU) MFA Director Tazhiev said State Secretary-Foreign Minister Saudabayev had been especially pleased with the tone of his Washington meetings during his February 1-4 visit. According to Tazhiev, Saudabayev found the Secretary warm and receptive to Astana's ideas across the board. Saudabayev was also pleased with preparations for the Global Nuclear Security Summit. NSA Jones had made U.S. views very clear on what progress in Afghanistan would form the basis for a meeting with the President. On the Summit, Tazhiev said it was clear that Afghanistan would be a key focus regardless of whatever other issues might be discussed. Tazhiev also said that Saudabayev had found A/S Blake particularly warm, taking a strong personal interest in building the relationship. On the Zhovtis case, there were few surprises and Tazhiev said that the embassy's request to visit the Ust-Kamenogorsk penal colony where the human rights activist is being held was nearly complete. He expected resolution within a week.

ABC SHOULD BE GRANDER

4. (SBU) Turning to the ABC scheduled for March 8-9, Tazhiev said Astana was ready to name its co-chairs once the United States provides information about its goals. But he repeated what we have often heard: Saudabayev still wants something more. Looking to the

Russia format and to past practice, he recounted the history of the joint commission during former President Clinton's presidency. According to Tazhiev, Saudabayev said this was the right formula for getting things done: a broad policy forum with high-level backing and sufficient staff support to ensure progress on the agenda. He said that the Annual Bilateral Consultations were a far cry from the past since they would take place at the level of Deputy Foreign Minister Kairat Umarov and A/S Blake. He said Astana doubted that this forum carried the appropriate political heft to get things done in Astana, and urged Washington to hear that Astana still prefers a higher level forum. Charge said the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs was committed to a successful dialogue across the board. Washington was preparing for the Summit and we expect the bilateral consultations with Kazakhstan to be as successful as those with other Central Asian states.

CENTCOM VISIT MAY CONFLICT WITH THE ABC

15. (SBU) Tazhiev welcomed the February 21 visit of SRAP Holbrooke, but said a meeting with President Nazarbayev was not possible. He noted that CENTCOM General Patraeus would come to Astana March 9, but worried that this conflicted with the ABCs, yet another sign of the questionable importance of the forum. Charge assured him that the Commander's visit would cover very specific issues, and said it was likely that the Ambassador would travel to Washington to participate in the broader forum.

HELP ON MANAGEMENT ISSUES

16. (SBU) Charge left informal points on two lingering administrative issues: first, the need for a meeting with Almaty tax authorities to assist locally-engaged staff, and second, lingering concerns over receipt of the diplomatic pouch. Tazhiev

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promised to assist with both, particularly the taxation meeting. Charge assured him that many employees want to act in good faith and pay their personal income taxes on a timely basis, which is our policy and theirs, but conflicting information and extra pressure from the authorities have created needless anxiety and confusion.

COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST

17. (SBU) The MFA view on the ABC is not new. We have an opportunity to make the ABC forum a productive and successful forum, but engagement with the Kazakhstani government will be most effective if we propose our agenda and co-chairs in the coming days.

While Charge made clear that the current formula is the one to prepare for, we can expect a continued press for a higher level forum that mirrors the format of the U.S.-Russia dialogue. Charge expressed the view that the ABC is a pragmatic and flexible format designed to address each country's situation. It offers the best way forward to address many issues of mutual interest. Keeping the Kazakhstanis positive and engaged will depend on our providing information soon about the agenda and our co-chairs. Post requests Washington action soonest. END COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST.

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